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ABSTRACT

The history of literacy education in Morocco, like that of the country as a whole, spans over two millennia. The history of literacy education begins in the early Islamic era (eighth century A.D.), continues through the colonial period, and ends in the post-colonial period. A review of the major developments in the area of literacy education in Morocco indicates that: (1) the religious factor has always been an important force behind literacy teaching and learning; (2) rote and recitation have also been consistent features of literacy learning and education in general; (3) literacy teaching and education in general have always been a function of the wider cultural and socio-economic situation; (4) the trend is toward the institutionalization of literacy education, including informal adult programs; and (5) the trend is also toward modernization and toward multiple literacies (including civic, functional, and cultural literacies.) (Thirty-seven references are attached.) (RS)

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LITERACY EDUCATION IN MOROCCO:
A SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Research Report

Abdelkader Ezzaki

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An Historical Survey of Literacy Education in Morocco: A Socio-Cultural Perspective

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O. Introduction

The history of literacy education in Morocco, like that of the country as a whole, spans over two millennia. It can indeed be said to have begun in the pre-Islamic era when Morocco and the neighboring region were under the rule or influence of the Berber Kingdoms, the Phenicians or Roman Empire. During this era, there existed in Morocco well-developed writing traditions, some of which were introduced into the region by Phenician merchants in the 12th century B.C. and some others were elaborated by the local Berber population (Alkhatib-Boujibar, 1984).

However, literacy education in its organized and presently pertinent form seems to have begun with the introduction and spread of Islam in the region in the 8th century A.D. Since that time, Islam has been a predominant source of educational activity and a major force behind the pursuit of literacy skills. In the present paper, we will trace the history of literacy education in Morocco. We will identify three general stages: (1) from the early Islamic era to the colonial invasion, (2) the colonial period, and (3) the post-colonial or present-day Morocco. Given the long period covered in the first stage, the developments that it carries will be reviewed in summary form and on the basis of specific themes, while those pertaining to the other two stages will be presented in relatively more detail, because of their higher relevance to the present-day situation. Literacy education within the context of this paper is taken in its global meaning and its socio-cultural dimensions (especially in the first two stages) and not only in its school and pedagogical sense.

I. From the early Islamic era to the colonial invasion

1. The establishment of the Islamic state

Meaningful and organized literacy activity in Morocco was inaugurated with the introduction and spread of Islam in the area, especially with the first Islamic dynasty (that of the Idrissids) in the eighth century (788). This dynasty, like its successors, built its legitimacy and strength on the cause of Islam. The spread of this new system of beliefs and values among the local Berber tribes and the building of the Islamic state could not be done without the teaching of the Arabic language, the Quran and the «hadith» (the sayings of the Prophet, Mohamed). Thus, the Idrissid rulers intensified the educative action begun by the earlier Islamic conquerors of the seventh century. Among other things, they built mosques in different parts of the territory for prayer and the learning of the Arabic language, the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet. Perhaps, the most significant events under this dynasty were the founding in the ninth century of the city of Fes (now referred to as the «intellectual

capital of Morocco») and the setting up in 857 (within the same city) of the first Islamic university -- the Quaraouiyine-- which was to play a major role in the total history of education in the region. (See, for example, Le Tourneaux, 1949).

Literacy education is viewed in Islam as a critical element of faith. In fact, the first verse of the Quran that was revealed to the Prophet Mohamed ordered the latter to perform the primary act of literacy, reading. The command was: « Read in the name of Thy Lord Who created!...Read! Thy Lord is the most bountiful One Who by the pen taught man what he did not know» (Surat 20). Aware of the importance of literacy in the spread and the practice of Islam and in the building of a new and strong Islamic society, the early Moslem leaders of the Islamic state made it a common practice to release prisoners of war if they taught a number (said to be 10) of Moslems to read and write.

Education in general --and by extension literacy, the instrument of its acquisition-- is perceived in Islam as a life-long process as it is attested by the Prophet's saying: «Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave». It is further viewed not simply as a means to achieve socio-economic advancement but, and perhaps more importantly, as fundamental in the total make-up of the Moslem individual and society. In another widely-quoted saying, the Prophet spoke of the necessity of education for all Moslems: «Seek knowledge, even if it be in China, for the pursuit of knowledge is obligatory for every Moslem, man or woman». As we will see in the present paper, literacy education in Morocco, and in fact in the whole of the Moslem world, has been central in the total life of society, including the political and religious sectors. (See also Al-Ahouani, 1968; Massilas & Jarrar, 1983.)

2. The subsequent developments: A summary

After the Idrissids, Morocco was ruled by the Almoravids from the beginning of the 11th to mid 12th centuries, the Almohads from mid-12th to mid- 13th centuries, the Merinids from mid 13th to mid- 15th centuries, the Wattasids and then the Saadists from the end of the 15th to mid-17th centuries and the Alaouits from mid-17th until today. Under these dynasties, literacy education exhibited some important features and witnessed several developments. Among the features we will highlight the following:

(1) The object (content) of literacy education in Morocco was of critical importance in the society at large. The reading material made available, the lectures given, the philosophical and scientific writings, and the curriculum of the educational institutions were always treated with the greatest attention by the intellectual and political communities. This was especially the case with philosophical and religious materials and the extent to which they reflected the ideological and philosophical doctrine of the dynasty in power. At times, books were banned or reinstated depending on whether or not they were consistent with the rulers' ideology and religious affiliations. A case in point was El Ghazzali's philosophical books which were officially declared dangerous and burnt under the Almoravids but subsequently re-introduced and circulated under the Almohads. On a number of occasions (e.g. under the Alaouit Mohamed Ben Abdellah), the central authority intervened to specify the guidelines for the curriculum of the Quaraouiyine University (Guennoun, 1961).

(2) One of the corner stones of literacy education throughout the history of Morocco is the Quranic school. Known in Arabic as the «kuttab», «msid» or «jamaa», it is the oldest type of educational institution in the country and the whole of the Moslem world. It was

introduced into Morocco through the Islamic conquest in the 7th century and gradually became not only a major literacy teaching institution, but also an instrument for disseminating Islam. Over time, it developed characteristics that made it distinguishable from similar institutions in the rest of the Moslem world. According to Ibn Khaldoun (1900), the Quranic school in Morocco is traditionally concerned with the learning of the Quran and its different «readings», whereas those in other regions (e.g. Tunisia and the Middle East), integrate the Quran with other related material such as the «hadith» and Arabic grammar.

Generally, a Quranic school is an annex to a mosque or to a privately owned house. The children (4 years and above) are taught by a community-supported teacher («fqih») to read and write verses of the Quran. After the initial training with the alphabet, the children begin to memorize Quranic verses written on wooden slates and then washed off after the memorization is completed. In the early phase of instruction, the writing of the verses is done by the teacher and the child gradually learns to copy the verses onto his slate. Beyond the memorization of the Quran, and at the more advanced stages, the student learns other religiously-related materials such as the «hadith», Islamic jurisprudence, Arabic grammar, and so forth. This learning is pursued in «medersas» (higher-level schools) or «zaouiyas» (brotherhoods). (For more details, see, for example, Al-Ahwani, 1967; Al-Manouni, 1961; Ibn Khaldoun, 1900; and Wagner & Lotfi, 1980).

(3) A related feature in the history of literacy education in Morocco is that the instructional and learning methods have remained dominated by a strong rote component. This applies not only to the context of the Quranic school, but also to the higher-levels of schooling referred to above. This memory component has remained a predominant one throughout the history of literacy education in Morocco. There were some calls for change in this rote-based approach as can be attested by a critical statement made by Abdellah Satti in front of King Abou Inane Al-Marini of the Merinids dynasty. (Shahidi, 1985, p. 17). However, the approach has generally remained unchanged, even until today.

(4) Another trait in the history of literacy education in Morocco is that it has remained dominated by the Islamic character. In the periods of intellectual glory, the subjects of learning and writing did extend beyond the purely religious areas. In the Mouahidine and Merinid eras, for example, the object of widespread reading and writing ranged from philosophy (with Averroes, and Ibn Tofail), medicine (with Ibn Zahr), mathematics (with Al Hassan Al Marrakshi), linguistics (with Jazouli and Ibn Osfour), history (with Abdelwahed Al Marrakshi), not to mention the arts, especially literature. However, these areas of study, were not perceived as entirely separate from the theological studies. In fact, they were treated as an integral part of religious practice and their pursuit an expression of faith in Islam (which is a system of beliefs meant for the management of the total life of man, both material and spiritual).

Turning now to the historical developments which have had an important impact on literacy education in Morocco, we may summarize them as follows:

(1) From the Quaraouiyine to other institutions: Throughout the history of education in Morocco, the Quaraouiyine University has remained the most influential center, especially with regard to the development of learning material, the training of the intellectual and scholarly leadership. It continued to attract scholars and students from different parts of the Islamic world, including Andalousia, Tunisia and the Mashriq (the East). However, this role was gradually shared (not necessarily undermined) by the newer educational

institutions. These included the «medersas» built in several cities by the Merinids in an attempt to decentralize education (Le Tourneaux, 1949). The «medersa» is a public educational institution which is similar to a secondary school in the present-day system. However, there were some which were clearly competing with the Quaraouiyine. Toward the end of their dynasty, the Merinids had founded more than 21 major «medersas» around the country, some of which are still important architectural monuments. Much later, under the Saadists policy of further decentralizing the learning opportunities, the Ben Youssef Islamic University was built in Marrakesh and subsequently became the major teaching center in the South of the country (Hijji, 1976). In addition to their educational purpose, all these institutions provided the ideological basis for the strengthening of the dynasty in power.

(2) Within the Islamic tradition of learning and practising reading, the Mourabidine era witnessed the birth of the art of Quranic «readings» as an independent subject of study (Guenoun, 1961). It is an area which is concerned with the characteristics, the practice and the teaching of the way the Quran is written and read aloud. Abu Bakr Ben Moujahid (of the Abbassids in the Middle East) had instituted seven Quranic reading styles in order to ensure standardization. He had chosen seven well-known scholars of his time and declared their styles as having divine validity, hence the common label «seven readings» (For more details, see, for example, Encyclopedia of Islam, under «Islam»).

In Morocco, the teaching of the seven styles grew so important that it became, under the Merinids (14th century), the subject of specialization of a whole «medersa» in Fes (Le Tourneaux, 1949). Among other things, the study of the «seven readings» consisted of (1) the «Attajwid» (the artistic recitation) and the variation in such phonic features as pharyngealization, vowel duration, assimilation, stoppages, the omission of some sounds in specific environments, (2) the study of orthography which examines the letter shapes, as they vary according to the grammatical functions and letter environments, and (3) «Dabt» which is concerned with the vocalization and the shapes of the «hamza» (glottal stop) in different environments (Hijji, 1976).

(3) Similar to the development of the art of Quranic readings was the emergence of interest in Arabic artistic writing (Arabic calligraphy). This interest, however, did not fully develop in Morocco until the 19th century, when the different types of Arabic writing were specified and their sources and characteristics determined (e.g. the «Mabsout» used for the writing of the Quranic codices, the «Almoujawhar» used for the writing of the royal decrees and the copying of the «hadith», and the «Musnad» used for the writing of scientific documents). The centers which were famous for the practice of Arabic calligraphy were Fes, Meknes, and Sale (Gennoun, 1961).

(4) Literacy education and dissemination were also affected by some important industrial developments. One of these developments was the introduction and the prosperity of the paper industry in Morocco under the Mourabidine dynasty. According to Al-Manouni (1984), Morocco and Andalusia were the route by which this industry found its way to Europe from the Middle East and the Far East (China), and the Arabs, themselves, were the agents of such transfer. Fes had 104 paper manufacturing units under the Mourabidines and 400 under the Mouahidines (not to speak of those in the other cities like Marrakesh and Sebta). This industry could not have prospered without the exploitation of its product through the practice of writing and reading. The common means for book-making was hand-writing and copying. Usually, the content of original books was memorized by learners and committed to paper later in several copies, especially after the burning or disappearance of the original manuscripts.

Just as paper manufacturing was the major industry affecting literacy use under the Mouahidines, so was the printing technology under the early Alaouits. Printing in the Arabic alphabet is reported to have appeared in Italy at the beginning of the 16th century under Pope Lyon X who published numerous books on christianity in Arabic (Al-Manouni, 1973). The first Arabic printing in Morocco occurred in 1864, through its elementary techniques which were introduced into the country by a Moroccan pilgrim upon his return from the Middle East. Electric printing was introduced much later and was especially known for its use in the publishing of the first Moroccan newspaper in Arabic (Al-Maghrib) whose first issue appeared in Tangiers in 1889 (Al-Manouni, 1973).

(5) One of the most significant socio-political developments that had an impact on education in general was the emergence and the activity of the «zaouiyas», especially when Morocco was subjected to foreign threats, beginning in the 16th century. The «zaouiyas» were religious communities gathered around a leader and a set of social and political ideals. They were generally the stronghold of religiously-based nationalism and constituted the centers of major educational activity. They attracted several scholars and students, including those of the major urban centers where the teaching and the intellectual activity were sometimes interrupted by political or social unrest. Thus, education gradually ceased to be the monopoly of the cities and this provided a form of spontaneous move towards a decentralized and democratized education.

The educational traditions in the «zaouiyas» were predominantly similar to those in the urban schools. However, by virtue of their nature and their interests, they focused in their teaching and other community activities more on the religious materials and were generally more concerned with the revival of the moral, nationalistic and religious feelings among the members. The most influential «zaouya» in the history of Morocco has been the «Dylaiya» (in the center of the country) which was a major educational as well as religious and political center.

(6) With the increasing needs for technical skills in the 19th centuries, specialized schools were created where literacy and numeracy education were combined with vocational training. Programs of this nature included those of military training and that of the Fes Engineering School built in 1844. As a result of the increasing contact with foreign cultures, it was at about the same time that Moroccan education began to open itself toward Europe. Thus, the Hassania School in Tangiers built by Hassan I in late 19th century was known to teach literacy in foreign languages alongside other subjects. The country also began in early 19th century to send to Europe large groups of selected students for technical and foreign language training (Al-Manouni, 1973).

II. The Colonial Period

Toward the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, Morocco was experiencing serious difficulties in several areas, including education. While the Middle-East, especially Egypt, was witnessing a cultural renaissance at that time, Morocco was suffering from a serious cultural decadence. At the same time, the growing political influence of foreign forces brought with it an increasing powerful presence of new school models. Thus, the Islamic education already weakened by stagnation soon saw itself surpassed by the more modern and dynamic foreign schools. This was, especially, the case after Morocco

succumbed to French colonialism.

During the entire period of colonial rule (1912-56), the French Protectorate sought to further its own political and economic interests through its educational policy. This policy was based on the following principles:

(a) Dominance of the French culture: exercising strict control on the content of the teaching, and discouraging any cultural or educational contact with the Middle-East (Al-Jabiri, no date).

(b) Setting up a highly selective educational system whereby the educational opportunities were severely limited and distributed on the basis of social class. The elite was offered the type of learning that prepared its members for the administrative and commercial leadership (Hardy, 1920, Al-Jabiri, no date). The working class (actually, a very small portion of it) was offered short vocational training for manual jobs in agriculture and industry. With this clientele, basic literacy training was immediately followed by job training.

(c) Making French the superior language of literacy, school and vocational training. Arabic, otherwise the normal medium of instruction, was taught as a foreign language in the French-run schools. More than that, its status was continuously threatened by the Protectorate through the promotion of the local dialects in the schools.

In implementation of its antagonistic policy towards the local educational values and practices, the Protectorate attempted to introduce serious changes into the Islamic educational institutions, including the Quranic school and its upper-level forms. Among other things, in 1930, by virtue of a law that aimed at the separation of the Berbers from the Arabs and the weakening of the Islamic culture, the French closed down all Quranic schools in the Berber-speaking regions. The law was subsequently defeated, but the Quranic schools were still not permitted to reopen immediately (Al-Jabiri, no date). Later, in 1937, in response to the popular call for more democratized schooling, the central government made the first attempt to organize the functioning of the Quranic school and thus issued a decree which set the administrative guidelines for the opening of the Quranic school and, in return, provided for an allowance to be given to the teachers.

In the area of public schooling, the Protectorate (through its selective strategies), could only achieve poor results in literacy education among the Moslem population, especially in the first period of colonolization (1912-44). In 1938, for example, the Moslem children at school did not exceed 23,877, whereas the number for the Europeans was 34,000. Yet, the ratio of Europeans to Moslems in the total population was 1 to 30. In 1945, the schooling rate among the Moslems was a mere 2.7%. In a whole period of 20 years (1926-1936), the system produced no more than 20 Moroccan senior high-school graduates. In the second period of the Protectorate (1944-56), and following the declaration of the Independence Manifest by the Nationalistic Movement, the Protectorate saw itself compelled to increase the schooling rate at the elementary level from 2.7% in 1945 to 7% in 1950 and 11% in 1954 (Al-Jabiri, no date).

The dissatisfaction and the pressure of the Nationalistic Movement led the Protectorate to create more opprtunities for literacy education among the local population, this time through organized campaigns in the rural areas. The project, was a part of a general socio-economic plan elaborated by the French Resident-General Eric Labonne in 1946, consisted

in setting up mobile schools known as «Les Ecoles Forraines» for the teaching of reading, writing and numeracy to unschooled children and adults. Because of its political overtones, the project never materialized and was opposed by Moroccan and colonial populations alike (Squalli, 1986).

Another action generated by the pressure of the nationalists was the increase (beginning in 1944) in the number of hours devoted to the teaching of Arabic and Islamic studies within the modern public schools. This, however, was not of much avail, for the instructors of these subjects were not trained in a manner that made them competitive with those of the other subjects, especially the French language. Thus, some Moroccan students remained poorly literate in Arabic, although they may have achieved significant progress in their schooling. This was even more noticeable among those who were going to schools intended for French children.

Facing up to the colonial education which was perceived as inadequate and even detrimental to the cultural identity of the country, the Nationalistic Movement proceeded, not without difficulty, to the creation of «independent» schools in different parts of the country. These schools, which were financed by private donations, were designed to provide wider educational opportunities and a competitive as well as nationalistic substitute for the colonial educational system. The curriculum was modern in its content and, at the same time, more oriented towards the Arabo-Islamic culture. In addition, the language of instruction was (Standard) Arabic, the national language. These schools attracted children from different social strata, and their student population reached, in the eve of Independence, more than 20,000. It is now felt that without these schools, the situation of Standard Arabic would have been seriously jeopardized by the Protectorate's educational policies. (For more discussion on the role of these schools, see Damis, 1970.)

In addition to its action in formal schooling, the nationalists organized a series of adult literacy programs. They set up community-based literacy learning centers in which the «eradication of illiteracy» was seen as both a religious and nationalistic mission. The Nationalistic Movement and the ensuing political parties viewed it as such and used it as a political investment against the colonizer and as a means to strengthen their ranks. The instructors were generally Quranic school teachers for whom these evening classes were a supplementary source of income as well as a nationalistic contribution. The learners were adults (most of them craftsmen) who were motivated by the patriotic duty and the prospect that literacy would make their professional activities more rewarding. The centers were generally annexes to mosques or houses and the object of teaching was the Quran, the basics of reading, writing and numeracy (interview data).

III. Literacy Education in Independent Morocco

1. The challenge of democratizing primary schooling

In the wake of Independence, there was pressure from the general public and the national forces to generalize the service of education to the masses. Independence was the long-awaited condition under which the people at large could release its frustration with the previously-experienced scarcity of educational opportunities. It was also the time in which the country had to fulfil the promise made by the Nationalistic Movement during

the struggle for independence that liberation would bring every child a seat at school. Liberation meant personal and collective success which, itself, was perceived as conditioned by the ability to read and write. Thus, at the beginning of every school year (starting in 1956), the registration sites used to be sieged for several days by parents waiting for their turn to enrol in their children in the public school system.

In response to this mounting pressure, the government had to take exceptional (hitherto untried) measures toward mass education, sometimes at the expense of the quality of the service: maximizing the use of the space available, hiring primary school teachers from among the Quranic school instructors, whose pedagogical skills were minimal.

As a result of the early political commitment to formal schooling, the population of primary school children was increased five times between 1956 and 1965. The schooling rate went from 17% to 50%. This rate was unfortunately slowed down in subsequent years (beginning in 1966) as a result of the high budgetary demands and the population explosion, and under a new philosophy of «realism». Among other things, the age for compulsory education was reduced from 7-14 to 7-13 and then to 7-12. In addition, the actual recruitment of children was reduced by about 25% (Al-Jabiri, no date).

In later years, the rate of democratizing primary schooling for seven-year olds was gradually improved. According to the Ministry of Education's statistics, this rate moved from 56% in 1977-78 to 65% in 1980-81, 75% in 1984 and 82% in 1985-86 (Ministere de Education Nationale, 1977, 1981, 1984, 1986). These figures do indicate an improvement. However, they appear to reflect the attempted goals rather than the actual reality.

2. Literacy teaching: Method and materials

The preparation of Arabic reading material for modern school learning began under the Protectorate. According to Jirari (1971), it was in 1945 that the first official committee for school textbooks was formed, and this was done at the initiative of late King Mohamed V. However, whatever was produced locally under the Protectorate, and even later, was not sufficient or appropriate for the changing educational needs. Reading materials were therefore imported from the Middle East or adapted from French (the adoption and adaptation phase). A few years after Independence, a single Moroccan series of readers (the Boukemmakh series) was produced for the primary schools (the Moroccanization phase). In the 1970s, the activity of producing readers was intensified under a liberal system of material production, which created a situation of competition among authors and publishers (the free market phase). The extent of this activity was such that one of the Moroccan series was exported to a number of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (Mauritania, Senegal, Ivory Coast, and Guinea). The proliferation of reading materials was also translated in the new practice of making available several support materials that accompany the readers. In the more recent times, the educational authorities have opted for the single series policy, whereby only one reading series is recognized as official.

With regard to the teaching methodology, the early materials were based in their first primers on the phonics approach through which the children were initially trained to recognize the letters and their variants, along with the vowel diacritics, before proceeding to the illustrative words and simple sentences. Grammar used to be taught deductively through rules and application exercises and was therefore handled separately from reading. In the more recent and currently used materials, the phonics approach has been replaced

by a more wholistic one, whereby the starting point is a short sentence, then the analysis goes to the word and later to the letter. The grammar is integrated to a certain extent in the readers and presented inductively. With regard to vocabulary, a serious and declared effort is made in the new material to include words that reflect modern life and that have been recently validated by the Institute for the Study and Research in Arabization, of Mohamed V University. (See, for example, the reading series «LUGHATI AL-ARABIYA»). The current material is also characterized by the inclusion of a wider variety of language exercises and questions.

The reading material for French (as a second language), has also undergone significant changes. During the Protectorate and the early years of Independence, the readers used in the Moroccan schools were authored by the French colonial system. The approach in the early primers was based on phonics, and the content was inspired from situations of rural North Africa. (See, for example, the reader «BONJOUR ALI, BONJOUR FATIMA»). In later years (early 1960s), the reading materials that were adopted were imported from France and therefore reflected a generally urban and modern life style. In the late 1970s, the Ministry of Education started producing a series of French readers, as a part of its program of «Moroccanizing» school material. The approach in this series and the one preceding it exhibits the following features: (1) phonics-based instruction, (2) integration of different language arts, (3) systematic contextualization of vocabulary, and (4) a mix between deductive and inductive treatment of grammar.

3. Adult literacy education

The enthusiasm for generalized literacy education in the wake of Independence was not limited to formal schooling, but was also extended to non-formal education. About this time, the rate of general illiteracy was about 90% (Ministere du Plan, 1984). In 1956, less than one month after Morocco regained its independence, a national league was set up for the eradication of illiteracy (the Moroccan League for Basic Education and the Eradication of illiteracy). Starting in the same year, the League organized a series of national campaigns for Arabic literacy.

The campaigns, which were inaugurated by the late king himself, involved the opening of 344 centers all around the country and the recruitment of 40,000 young teaching volunteers, 25% of whom were females. As many as 400,000 illiterates took part in this campaign, 15% of whom were females (Baina, 1981). The program of instruction, which was administered through regular evening classes comprised reading, writing and numeracy. Certificates were awarded to the participants who completed the course.

Parallel to these early campaigns, the League began contributing to the publication of a weekly newspaper in vocalized Arabic under the title «Manar Al-Maghrib» and intended for the learners of basic literacy skills. This newspaper, which was first issued in July 22, 1956 as a weekly continued to appear until recently, with the happy difference that it subsequently became a daily (Grandguillaume, 1983).

Unfortunately, this Independence-inspired enthusiasm for mass literacy education faded away, under the hardship of the mismatch between the means and the ambitions. As it was the case in other countries in similar conditions (e.g. Tunisia), a philosophy was apparently developed that adult illiteracy was, at its broad and generational level, a problem of reduced

rate in primary schooling and that it would be better combatted at the root (i.e. primary schooling), and on one front, rather than dispersing the efforts. Thus, in the early 1960s, the government's efforts were directed toward this sector of primary schooling. Literacy education was placed almost entirely under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. The benefits of the Ministry's efforts in this period were noticeable, for the rate of illiteracy dropped from 87% in 1960 to 75% in 1971.

While the major investement was made through the Ministry of Education, different semi-public or private institutions took the initiative of developing literacy programs for their employees. This form of job-related literacy appeared in Morocco as early as the mid-1960s. The major experience in this area was that of the «Office Cherifien des Phosphates» (the administration in charge of the Phosphates industry). The experience consisted of two programs in two production centers, one in Arabic and one in French (Grandguillaume, 1983). The success of these programs was such that other commercial and industrial institutions followed the example. These institutions included the railway system (ONCF), the export office (OCE), and the electricity board (ONE). In all these programs, literacy instruction sought to enable the participants to function more adequately within their work settings.

Within the same trend of institution-initiated programs, a number of ministries have undertaken the administration of functionally-oriented programs which combine literacy education with the teaching of vocational or social skills. These programs were targeted to specific groups which presented special social needs (e.g. unemployed females, rural communities). The ministries that had the largest programs in this period were the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Interior (Ministere de l'Artisanat et des Affaires Sociales, 1985). Instruction comprised vocational training (especially handicraft and home economics) as well as literacy, numeracy and civic awareness.

Beginning in 1978, and until today, adult literacy education has been placed under the responsibility of the Ministry of Handicraft and Social Affairs. This administrative change was motivated by the then emerging view of illiteracy as being a social handicap (and not simply an educational problem). With this general outlook, and the adherence to the «functionality» principle, this Ministry has been undertaking action through different types of programs, namely:

(1) Women's qualification program: This program is intended for unschooled or semi-illiterate females and designed to provide literacy and vocational training.

(2) Literacy education within industrial settings: The largest program of this category is the one administered in the carpet factories. It is paid for by the industry itself (through a sales tax on the carpets) and designed to improve the vocational skills of the female work force and raise their literacy standard toward the third-grade level. More recently, the Ministry has attempted literacy instruction in more industrial factories (cement, sugar, and automobile industries).

(3) National literacy campaigns: These campaigns, unlike the earlier ones, are limited in scope but more focused. Like the rest of the more recent programs, they are functionally-oriented in that they increasingly favor the professional groups and attempt to integrate literacy with the work or daily concerns of the participants, along with the health and social values and skills which are perceived to contribute to «good» citizenship.

4. Literacy education through Quranic schooling

In Independent Morocco, the Quranic school has continued to receive attention from the educational authorities. Two major reforms have been initiated. The first one, which was enacted in 1958, sought to modernize, organize and set the standards for the functioning of the Quranic schools. It provided for pedagogical and physical requirements to be met by the teacher and the school. It also specified the number of teaching hours and the pedagogical principles to follow. Unfortunately, the provisions of this reform were never enforced, and the Quranic school continued to linger behind the more modern public school. The second reform, however, has had a significant impact. Following a decision by King Hassan II announced on October 9, 1968, the Quranic school was assigned an official role which is that of a pre-school for children below seven of age, thereby saving the government the expenses for two possible years of formal primary schooling. In order to help reinforce this important status, the promise was made that the children who attended the Quranic school would be given priority in the public primary school system. Besides, incentives were given to help prospective teachers set up their Quranic schools and modernize their instruction.

Currently, as a result of this reform, there are two types of Quranic schools, one traditional and the other modern. The traditional schools are those which have continued to adhere to the old pedagogical practices described earlier. The non-traditional schools, on the other hand, are closer to the modern secular pre-schools. This is reflected, especially, in the variety exhibited by its curriculum, for it includes not only the memorization of the Quran, but also the reading and writing of non-religious material. The teacher is an «entrepreneur» who pays rent and collects tuition from the children's parents.

The Quranic school, in its two forms, is the more common pre-school institution, far more common than the secular (European type) early childhood schools. The ratio of the former to the latter is 24 to 1 (Ministere de l'Education Nationale, 1986).

Because of the strong presence of the Quranic school in the Moroccan educational culture, a number of educationally-oriented institutions are developing interest in upgrading its service or investigating its impact. Among these institutions is UNICEF which has recently started organizing training sessions for groups of Quranic school teachers, with the objective of introducing more modern (especially health-oriented) component into the curriculum of these schools. It is the same awareness of the importance of the Quranic school that motivated the «Morocco Literacy Project», a longitudinal study which is investigating, among other things, the impact of this type of institution on subsequent literacy learning. (See, for example, Ezzaki, Spratt & Wagner, 1987).

Conclusion

The purpose of the present paper was to review the major developments in the area of literacy education in Morocco. From the historical outlook presented above, we can draw some general conclusions about the nature of literacy in this part of the Arabo-Islamic world. Some of these conclusions reflect constant features, while others pertain to trends in historical changes. Among the conclusions in the first category, we may highlight the following:

(1) The religious factor has always been an important force behind the literacy teaching and learning. Literacy is the key to the basic Islamic literature, especially the Quran and the «hadith». Although the Islamic system of values is no longer the only source of school curriculum, it has always been present in the literacy education materials, including those of current modern public schools.

(2) Rote and recitation have also been consistent features of literacy learning and education in general. Although the present-day educational system has integrated the more creative and comprehension-based objectives in its curriculum, rote learning still maintains a strong position within the Moroccan educational practices.

(3) Literacy teaching (in fact, education in general) in Morocco has always been a function of the wider cultural and socio-economic situation. In addition to its association with religion, literacy education has consistently been driven, or at least affected by, the general intellectual activity, the degree of prosperity and the political situation in the country. In its relationship with this host of factors, the changes that it underwent have not only quantitative (how much literacy), but also qualitative (what kind of literacy).

As to the changes (old and new), they may be summarized through the specification of the following trends:

(1) The trend toward the institutionalization of literacy education, including the informal adult programs. Even the Quranic schools which were community-based and unofficial in character are now subject to administrative organization.

(2) The trend towards modernization (incorporation of modern (especially European) practices and teaching techniques.) These techniques include improved visual aids and a variety of language exercises.

(3) The trend toward multiple literacies. With the growing complexity of the Moroccan society, especially in recent history, there has been a move from one type of literacy (alphabetic and religious) to a variety of literacies such as the civic, functional and cultural ones. With the continuing impact of colonialism, there is a felt need for literacy in more than one language, and there are now at least two competing literacies, one in Arabic and the other in French.

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